

Train Like an Astronaut Educational Outreach

Yamil L. Garcia, MS, ATC, CSCS, Wyle Human Performance and Engineering Division, Houston, TX

Charles Lloyd, PhD, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Houston, TX

Katherine M. Reeves, BS, Wyle Human Performance and Engineering Division, Houston, TX

Laurie J. Abadie, MS, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Houston TX

In an effort to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), capitalizing on the theme of human spaceflight developed two educational outreach programs for children ages 8-12. To motivate young “fit explorers,” the *Train Like an Astronaut National (TLA)* program and the *Mission X: Train Like an Astronaut International Fitness Challenge (MX)* were created. Based on the astronauts’ physical training, these programs consist of activities developed by educators and experts in the areas of space life sciences and fitness. These Activities address components of physical fitness. The educational content hopes to promote students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

At the national level, in partnership with First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move!* Initiative, the *TLA* program consists of 10 physical and 2 educational activities. The program encourages families, schools, and communities to work collaboratively in order to reinforce in children and their families the importance of healthy lifestyle habits

In contrast, the *MX* challenge is a cooperative outreach program involving numerous space agencies and other international partner institutions. During the six-week period, teams of students from around the world are challenged to improve their physical fitness and collectively accumulate points by completing 18 core activities.

During the 2011 pilot year, a total of 137 teams and more than 4,000 students from 12 countries participated in the event. *MX* will be implemented within 24 countries during the 2012 challenge. It is projected that 7,000 children will “*train like an astronaut*”.

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the session, participants will be able to: 1. Differentiate between NASA’s National and International programs with efforts to fight childhood obesity 2. Understand the current impact the programs are having at the National and International level on the children participating.